

CHURCH OF ENGLAND INSTRUCTION
SOCIETY, SHEFFIELD.

On Monday evening, May 1, an interesting lecture on "English Ecclesiastical Architecture," was delivered before the members and friends of the Church of England Instruction Society, by Dr. Branson. After some allusion to a previous lecture before the same audience, by the Rev. Mr. Upton, Dr. Branson remarked, in reference to the title of his lecture, that it was adopted in order to avoid as much as possible the term "Gothic," so commonly applied, or rather "misapplied," to that species of architecture of which the pointed arch forms so remarkable feature. After a series of preliminary details, explanatory of the progress of architecture in this country from the earliest period to the era of the species more immediately under consideration, with a cursory notice of existing examples of the different style in our old churches and other edifices, the lecturer adverted at some length to the much disputed origin of the pointed arch, the invention of which has been alternately attributed to the Goths, the Italians, the French, the Germans, and the English—to say nothing of more fanciful theories, such as that the pointed arch originated with the Egyptians, in placing two large stones in an oblique position; the Doctor himself appeared to regard the present balance of evidence as in favour of a Saracenic origin. After various details, the subject was pursued under the following heads:—1. the Norman style; 2. the early English style; 3. the Decorated style; 4. the Perpendicular style. Of the periods and styles thus indicated, the following may be given as the summary:—1st. The Norman, which prevailed from the Conquest to the end of the reign of Henry II., in 1154, and characterized by its semicircular arches and rude ornaments. 2nd. The early English; which prevailed to the end of the reign of Edward I., in 1307, known by its pointed arches, lancet windows, and toothed ornaments. 3rd. The Decorated, which continued in use a few years later than the end of the reign of Edward III., in 1377. The windows in this style are larger and divided by mullions, and the heads of the windows are filled in with flowing tracery. Lastly, the Perpendicular, which prevailed till the end of the reign of Henry VIII., in 1546. The constant panelling and the mullions running in perpendicular lines through the heads of the windows, sufficiently characterize the style. Enough, he thought, had been said to disprove the assertion of Evelyn, quoted by Sir Christopher Wren, that Gothic architecture, as he styles it, is a "congestion of heavy, dark, melancholy, monkish piles." Sir Christopher himself calls the "long-drawn aisles and fretted vaults" mere "mountains of stone, vast, gigantic buildings, but not worthy of the name of architecture;" and he describes the inventors of this style as setting up slender and misshapen pillars, or rather bundles of staves and other incongruous props, to support ponderous arched roofs without entablatures, and that the Goths and Vandals having demolished the Greek and Roman architecture, introduced in its stead a certain fantastical and licentious manner of building, which we have since called "modern Gothic, of the greatest industry and expensive carving, full fret and lamentable imagery, sparing neither pains nor costs." It is to be regretted one so deservedly placed in the very first rank of architects, in this or any other country, should have lent the sanction of his high name to the despisers of our ecclesiastical buildings. The sentence passed on the so-called invention of the "Goths and Vandals," by one who had given such a proof of his architectural powers in the cathedral of St. Paul's, was little likely to be disputed at the time; his authority was sufficient to influence not only architects, but the patrons of architecture, and the force of his example has been sensibly felt even at the present day. The facts the lecturer wished to establish were these:—That the Saxon architecture was a ruder imitation of Roman work than is to be met with in other countries, and that very few traces of Saxon buildings exist at the present day; that Norman architecture in this country did not arise from the gradual improvement of the Saxon, but was a distinct style introduced at the Conquest, and was also of Roman origin; that churches erected during the transition of one style to another partake of them

both; that there are four distinct styles observable in English ecclesiastical architecture, previous to the reformation, is clearly to be recognised and distinguished by their forms and ornaments, as the five orders of the Grecian architecture appears to be demonstrated. It is equally clear, as Dr. Branson remarked, that architects of a later style, in repairing or adding to existing churches, almost invariably introduced, in their repairs, the prevailing fashion of the day, and consequently the date of the church can be pretty accurately ascertained by a mere inspection of the form of its windows, doors, arches, and ornaments. It is this last fact that clothes with so much interest the study of church architecture in England. Even a slight acquaintance with its principles and details proves a source of unmixed delight. It is impossible to view these majestic monuments of the piety of our ancestors, connecting links with the present and the past, without the mind being carried back to the times in which they were constructed. The village church and stately cathedral alike teem with the visions of the past. What scenes have they not witnessed? What tales could they not tell? Every stone of their venerable pile is a record of the progress of science and art. The ruined slabs, which even the hand of man has not dared completely to destroy, graceful in its wreck, and beautiful in age, is invested with a new interest; and though regarded before, perhaps, merely as a striking feature in a picturesque landscape, becomes at once, if we may be allowed the expression, a memoria-technica, a standing chronicle of national history. Imagination repairs the time-worn columns, and peoples the deserted aisles. The great and good pass in review, and the truth is forced upon us, that with all their faults, it is mainly to these religious establishments we owe the preservation of the lamp of learning, so feebly illuminating, it is true, the darkness which surrounded it, but sufficient to kindle the blaze of modern science. Without them how vague would have been our knowledge of many of the nations of antiquity! Rome would have been as Babylon—the Parthenon as an Egyptian pyramid. The poets, the historians, the orators, the philosophers of old, would have lived only for themselves; for us they would have lived in vain. If, then, a sentiment of wonder and admiration can be excited by wandering among the ruins of the Acropolis, or tracing the fragments of departed Rome, how much brighter that feeling must become within the walls of a holier shrine. The worthy Doctor illustrated the lecture with a series of beautiful drawings from his own accomplished pencil, representing the leading features of the four styles treated of.

NEW CHURCH AT WILTON.

This splendid edifice has been erected by the Hon. Sidney Herbert, the Secretary to the Admiralty. The sum expended will not fall short of 20,000*l.*, so that the architects, Messrs. Wyatt and Brandon, have been permitted to carry out their ideas without all those arbitrary restrictions which, from the want of adequate funds, usually cramp designs of this high class. The style which has been adopted (at the suggestion of Mr. Herbert himself) is as yet but little known in this country, and has recommended itself from its picturesque effect; and all the beauties and characteristics of Lombardic architecture have most assuredly been brought out, and are admirably developed in this choice specimen of the style.

The church is built entirely of Bath stone, and consists of a nave and two aisles, with apses in each, but the apse belonging to the former is larger, and projects beyond the others. This apse has seven narrow circular-headed lights, while those which terminate the aisles have only five each. At a little distance from the apses, arches will be thrown across both the nave and aisles, supported by marble columns on white marble bases. The columns themselves, which are very handsome, have been brought from Italy. The space in the nave between this transverse arch and the altar will, no doubt, be left entirely free. The nave arches to the west, where the altar will stand, are curiously arranged: they are three in number, but the two exterior ones are very

much smaller than the middle one. There is also a small one, similar to these two, on the east side of this transverse arch. The remaining arches, six in number, are all uniform; they are semicircular, and quite plain. The columns are circular and of stone: scrolls and figures will ornament their capitals.

The exterior of the building promises to be very magnificent. The front which faces the street is intended to be highly ornamented. The nave and aisles have each a door; above the middle one is a row of nine small lights, and above these again will come a very large rose-window of most elaborate design, set within a square, whose spandrels are sculptured with the emblems of the four Evangelists. Over each of the two aisle doors is a small and pretty niche. The side walls are, perhaps, a little wanting in richness.

The tower is a most splendid and picturesque object; it is very lofty, built entirely of stone, and is separate from the church, being only connected by a vestibule or cloister, whose open arches and columns produce an admirable effect, when contrasted with the breadth and solidity of other parts. It forcibly reminds us of the campanile of St. Mark's, at Venice.

Unlike the generality of our new churches, which, even when they have a tolerably fair exterior, are more or less naked and mean within, we learn that all the internal decorations of this church will be very handsome, and quite in keeping with the architectural beauty of the sacred edifice itself.

Round the lower part of the middle apse there is to be a series of very beautiful mosaic columns, such as we meet with in the ancient Italian churches. There is also a large slab of mosaic, which struck us as being admirably adapted for the front of the altar, and for which purpose it is, no doubt, intended. The above church ornaments were lately purchased by Mr. Herbert, at the sale of a private collection of objects of art, who rightly deemed that what once had ornamented the House of God ought to be re-appropriated to his honour and restored to their proper place.

Amongst other things we also noticed two full-length paintings of St. Peter and St. Paul, and two beautiful bas-reliefs, which are intended to ornament the interior. One of the bas-reliefs is a Pietà, and the other represents "The Flight into Egypt."

The roof is of oak, open and richly carved, and the groining of the roof and the semi-domes of the three apses will be painted in fresco. The floor will be paved in imitation of mosaic, the windows filled with fine old foreign glass, and the chancel itself elaborately and gorgeously decorated! The organ will be an instrument of singular beauty and great power. The font and pulpit will both be of marble, and the latter, as well as the reading-desk, kept well clear of the chancel arch, so as not to obstruct the view of the altar. We have yet an announcement to make, which fills us more with admiration of Mr. Herbert's character than his munificence. We allude to his consideration for the poor. There are neither pews nor galleries in the new church at Wilton.—*British Queen.*

We have received the following through the hands of a respectable tradesman, and are happy to say that subscriptions have already commenced at our office:—

"May, 1843.

"This appeal to the humane and charitable is made on behalf of MARGARET JORDAN, widow of JOSEPH JORDAN, Carpenter, who died in St. George's Hospital, in consequence of a fall from a ladder while fixing a water-spout at the house he occupied, No. 7, Marlborough-street, Chelsea. He was out of employment the long space of twenty-three weeks previous to the accident, and has left behind him a widow (who is at present *enervate*) with a family of nine small children, totally unprovided for. The smallest donations will be thankfully received by the following, and most of the respectable tradesmen of Chelsea and Brompton:—

"Mr. Symons' Library, Brompton-row.

Mr. Dale, 82, Leader-street.

Mr. Fell, 18, Paradise-row.

Mr. J. H. Keats' Library, 142, Sloane-street.

Mrs. Walker, 150, Sloane-street.

Mr. E. O. Symons, Exeter-street, Sloane-street, Treasurer."